

Remarks

The Office Action mailed May 3, 2005 has been carefully considered, and Applicants' counsel offers the following remarks.

The Office Action rejects claims 1-6 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Sun et al (US 6124391) in view of Dahmen et al (US 5409771). Specifically, the Office Action asserts that Sun et al. discloses all of the claimed limitations except that the filler is fiber. The Office Action asserts that it would have been obvious to use the fibers taught in Dahmen in place of the clay in Sun et al. with the expectation of enhancing anticaking property.

The present invention is directed towards a water sorptive product comprising a wet-laid web of particulate pre-superabsorbent polymer (pre-SAP), neutralization agent, fiber, and water, as disclosed in the present application. The particulate pre-superabsorbent polymer is partially neutralized by neutralizing the polymer after mixing the polymer with the fiber and water during the wet-laid process of making a web, wherein the degree of neutralization of the SAP is partial, and preferably less than about 80 mol %.

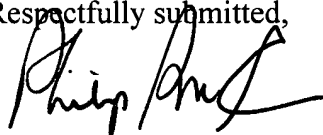
Neither Sun et al. nor Dahmen et al. teaches or suggest a water sorptive product comprising a wet-laid web of a superabsorbent polymer. In fact, the term wet-laid is not used or suggested in either of the references to describe the respective product thereof. This limitation should not be read out of the claims. Claim 1, as amended herein, more particularly describes the product of the present invention as comprising a wet-laid web of a particulate pre-superabsorbent polymer, neutralization agent, fiber, and water. Neither of the cited references discloses all of these claimed limitations. Nor do the references disclose neutralizing a particulate pre-superabsorbent polymer.

Further, the Office Action asserts that Sun et al. teaches CRC and AUL properties that fall within the claims of the present invention. As noted above, Sun et al. does not teach a water sorptive product comprising a wet-laid web of a superabsorbent polymer, neutralization agent, fiber, and water. Therefore, it is inappropriate to compare the CRC and AUL values of the superabsorbent polymer taught by Sun et al. with the CRC and AUL values of the wet-laid product disclosed and claimed in the present application.

Finally, there is no teaching or suggestion in Sun et al. of using fibers, such as those taught by Dahmen, to enhance anti-caking properties. The anti-caking test disclosed in Col. 10, line 19 *et seq.* of Sun et al. is designed for "particulate material compositions (of inorganic powder [clay] and SAP)." If fibers were used in place of the inorganic powder (clay) in Sun et al. then the anti-caking test disclosed by Sun et al. would not be appropriate for determining whether the resulting composition has enhanced anti-caking properties. Therefore, Sun et al. teaches away from using fibers taught by Dahmen in place of the inorganic powder (clay).

In view of the forgoing amendments and remarks, allowance of claims 1-6 and 20-22 is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,



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